



City of Boston, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor
Michelle Wu

Dear Back Bay leaders,

Thank you for your ongoing partnership to support the quality of life and economic vitality of our city through your civic leadership. As one part of the follow up to the thoughtful feedback from the Back Bay Association, elected colleagues, and neighborhood leaders at the December meeting and over the last several months, I write to share some updates on steps we will be taking on roadway design in general and on Boylston Street in particular.

Many of you helped shape the visioning processes over successive administrations to make Boston's transportation network safer and more accessible for all roadway users. As you know, Boylston Street was first identified as a major corridor needing multimodal options including cycling infrastructure in the Menino administration's 2013 [Boston Bike Network Plan](#), then reemphasized in the Walsh administration's Go Boston 2030 transportation visioning process completed in 2017. Over the course of many years of community process, there was neighborhood consensus in support of adding this cycling link between the heavily used bike lanes at Mass Ave and those around the Public Garden.

During the 2022 Orange Line shutdown, the City created a temporary bus lane on part of Boylston Street west of Clarendon to efficiently move shuttle buses carrying T riders while the subway was under repair. Following these changes, the MBTA documented improved performance of bus lines running through the corridor, which led to keeping the dedicated bus lane and incorporating a more permanent configuration into the original Boylston Street bike lane project.

Based on observational analysis reinforcing community feedback following the permanent installation in July 2024, the dedicated bus lane has not functioned as intended to justify the space allocation. In addition to buses often not having a clear path of travel, the bus lane is regularly used for driving and parking on parts of the street that are very constrained serving area businesses, hotels, and the Boston Public Library.

As such, starting in the coming weeks and as weather allows, my administration will remove the Boylston Street bus lane and work with local stakeholders to reallocate the space to improve overall flow (including for MBTA buses) and address loading needs. We will also ramp up enforcement to address traffic caused by ongoing double-parking related to food delivery pickups and construction, especially in the block between Dartmouth and Clarendon.

Our ongoing focus on the transportation network is key to ensuring that Boston is ready for the future—as the safest, greenest, and most family-friendly city in the country. Since taking office three years ago, our administration has taken action to address longstanding transportation needs impacting the entire region. We have invested in a foundational commitment to maintaining state-of-good repair for roads, bridges, sidewalks, and crosswalks with dedicated programs focused on repaving, repainting, and repair, and responded to widespread demand to reduce speeds and safety risks on neighborhood streets. We have partnered with the state to make MBTA slow zone fixes possible on an expedited timeline by coordinating shuttle transportation on Boston's roads during subway shutdowns, implemented and expanded fare-free public transit on the most heavily used MBTA bus lines, and became one of just two cities in the country to tackle traffic by using AI to improve signal timing with Google's Project Greenlight. We are also thankful for your partnership as we recently announced an ordinance to crack down on dangerous and illegal roadway behavior from scooters and mopeds increasingly used for food delivery.

Ultimately, Boston's 850 miles of roadway must be comprehensively connected and maintained so all community members have safe, convenient, and reliable options to get where they need to go. Over the last fifteen years, City transportation planners and engineers have worked to envision and implement multimodal street design with the goal of moving more people on the same limited roadway space in our historic city. The Menino administration kicked off this evolution of Boston's roads by installing 65 miles of bike facilities in their last three years, and the Walsh administration added a Neighborhood Slow Streets program and Vision Zero initiative to accelerate infrastructure changes for immediate safety improvements with quick-build installations of temporary plastic flexposts and painted roadway markings.

As citywide bike infrastructure has been built out piece by piece across the last decade, our administration has had the responsibility to finish several critical links in the network to make them fully usable and safe. These last links are often the most difficult community conversations involving significant tradeoffs. I have heard from you and other community members that the process to evaluate these tradeoffs and the varying perspectives of local neighbors and citywide commuters has at times felt rushed and predetermined. On such a core city function as the streets, where we have the benefit of partners in every

neighborhood with such a depth of localized knowledge and pride of ownership, we must get it right.

Many of these projects have been implemented successfully, in close partnership with residents and neighborhoods, and have quickly blended into the fabric of our neighborhoods. But others have not. Some measures intended as temporary installations with quick-build flexposts and paint to immediately improve safety have been allowed to remain for too long without review or refinement, or resulted in unintended or unaddressed impacts on the local road network. Other areas have become eyesores when plastic flexposts are repeatedly crumpled. At this point in Boston's evolution of roadway design it is time to review what has been installed over the last fifteen years, adjust or redesign what has not been functioning well, and transition successful temporary safety fixes into permanent, beautiful infrastructure that enhances quality of life and matches the character of our neighborhoods.

After significant feedback from residents and consultation with relevant City departments, I have asked the City's Superintendent of Basic City Services, Michael Brohel, to lead the review of roadway changes implemented in recent years and engage with local stakeholders and our engineering teams to identify recommendations for adjustments, with the first set to be returned to me within 30 days. We will also convene an advisory group focused on the transition from temporary to permanent infrastructure that matches the form, function and history of our neighborhoods.

As we move into the next phase of delivering safe, connected, beautiful streets—our ongoing work to enable more Bostonians to safely share the roads will and must continue. Our investments in signal optimization, public transit, thoughtful bike infrastructure, and walkable neighborhoods will deliver benefits for everyone, including drivers. Outside of family and sports, there is almost nothing that inspires the passion of Bostonians like our roads, and there will be times when committed residents will not agree with each other on changes. We welcome the ongoing dialogue with you and the entire community to make the best possible choices for our city and prepare for our brightest future. Thank you for your dedication to the neighborhood and to Boston.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Wu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michelle" and the last name "Wu" clearly distinguishable.

Michelle Wu
Mayor of Boston

cc:

City Councilor Sharon Durkan

State Representative Jay Livingstone

State Senator Lydia Edwards

Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association

Martyn Roetter, Neighborhood Association of Back Bay